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# AN ANCIENT POET

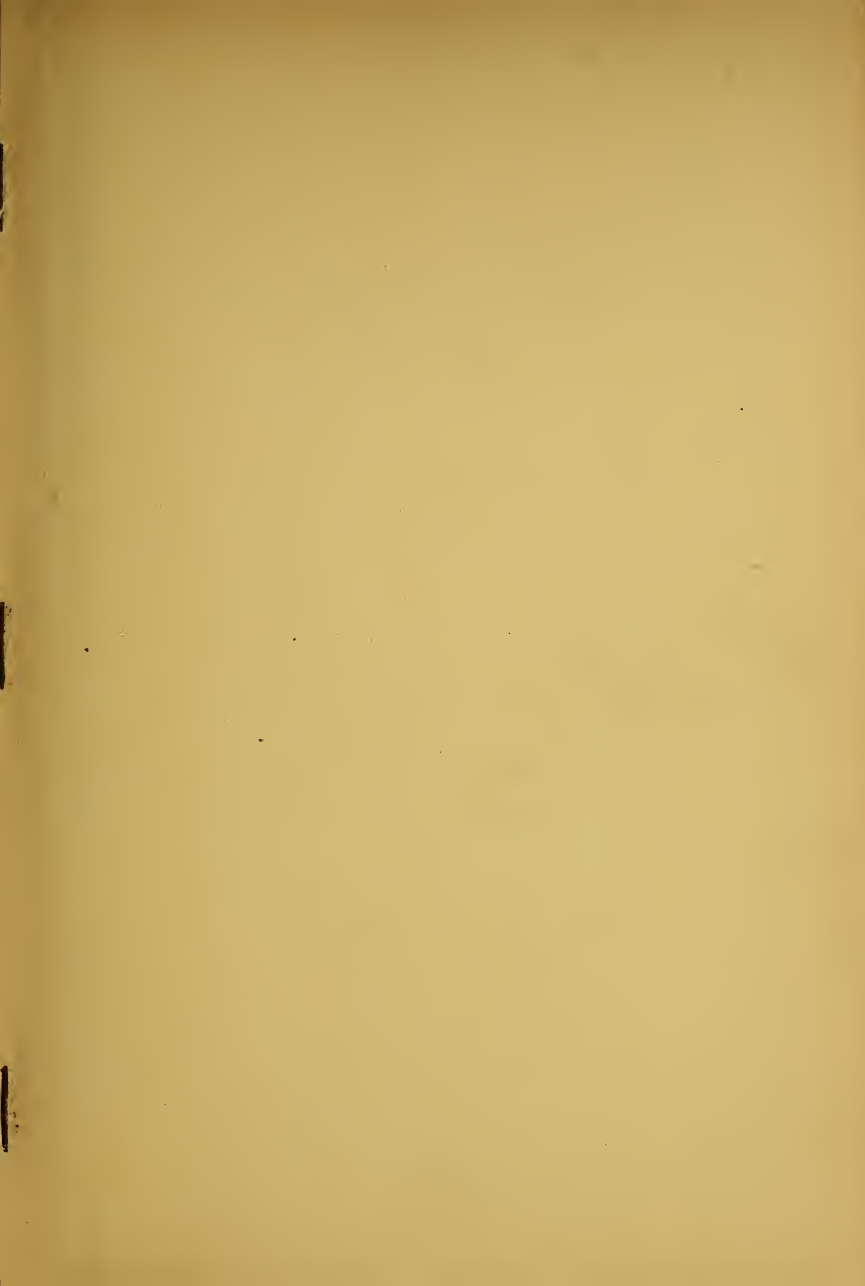


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# An Ancient Poet

## The Legend of An Ancient Poet

By  
ADOLPH NEWMAN



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## The Legend of an Ancient Poet

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This is a short fanciful sketch of the life of a sublime, fantastic poet who lived ages ago in an Eastern land. . . . This poet dwelt among people that hated him; the poor hated him because he preached heresy, and the rich hated him because he preached Communism. Throughout his life he was persecuted in many ways, but he died uncomplaining, tranquil and satisfied, consoled by the thought that his sufferings would end in death, and that the past was of no account, since death would obliterate and render nought the past, whether it was a suffering past or an unsuffering past.

The Poet was the son of slaves, and himself would have remained a slave but for the cunning of his parents. They, moved by deep love for him and by abhorrence of slavery, secretly accumulated a little hoard of money (how they obtained it nobody knew) and begged a compassionate freeman to purchase with this money the freedom of their son; which this man did (and for doing this, though it cost him nothing, may he now be singing *Te Deums* and Alleluiahs in paradise!) Thus they lived to see their son freed, and they rejoiced; but not for long did they rejoice, for soon they died—and 'twas perhaps sudden excess of joy that caused their death—who knows? . . . Their son, the future poet, was by this time a fine boy. Fifteen summers—perhaps more, perhaps less—had he seen under the yoke of slavery, but the time was enough to have given him a distaste for it, as proven later by his writings. He

mourned his dear parents, and the misery of their fate caused him great sadness. . . . Alone in the world, for many months after their death he lived like a hungry, houseless dog, wandering persecuted from place to place in quest of food and shelter and finding no compassion in the hearts of men. The great misery he suffered embittered his mind, and his spirit, young as he was, rose protesting against conditions that permitted poverty in the world. Looking around him, he saw that the earth held abundance of food and riches for all men, and that yet many, free-men as well as slaves, went hungry and destitute. And thereat he wondered. . . . Assuredly he would have succumbed but for the compassionate man who had purchased freedom for him. This man, meeting the boy one day and learning that he was friendless, befriended him, and a good Samaritan he was indeed; for he himself began educating the boy and let him do labor on his little farm for a living. And when ten, or 'twas perhaps twelve, years later the good man died, his possessions, including the little farm, became by his will the property of his protégé, who, being by this time a fine young man, took unto himself a wife. By her he had a son, whom together with his spouse he cherished and loved as long as he lived.

The Poet, under the guidance and teaching of his benefactor, made good progress in the paths of learning. Even in his hours of leisure he read and studied many books, and several years having passed, behold him!—a paragon of learning, a marvel for his age, indeed. So learned and wise was he that even the priests and school-masters he excelled in learning and confounded with his reasoning and logic. But that he should have acquired in so few years of study his stupendous knowledge of things, all men



wondered. (Perhaps he was, as said years afterwards by his enemies, the Devil, masquerading on earth for diversion.) Nevertheless, too much knowledge in a young head is not good for the owner of the head. Our hero, feeling after his marriage the flames of the divine fire in his bosom and obeying the promptings of his young muse, began writing poems. Men praised him for the charming songs he wrote, but anent his poems embodying revolutionary ideas they remained silent, excusing him on account of his young age for writing them. His friends even endeavored to dissuade him from writing such poems, pointing out to him that it could lead him only to peril and bring him nothing.—But where is the young head with great learning stored that can refrain from giving expression to the ideas it has (which it considers sublime)? If ever there has been one, it remained silent only through fear or prudence; or, if uninfluenced by fear or prudence, remained silent because it already recognized the vanity and futility of all things, even absolute wisdom, and hence preferred to carry its ideas with itself into oblivion rather than expose itself to persecution and death. Howsoever men may contemplate such things, they should admit, though, that if it had not been for fearless men of genius, the world never would have progressed; for, if all men of genius had been guided by prudence, their ideas and work should have been lost to the world, and we today be living in a barbarous state. . . . The Poet, moreover, was very reasonable in his theories. He refuted without difficulty the arguments of the champions of the lore and superstitions of the time, and his condemnation of the rich and oppressing classes was justified. His opinions in respect to individual possessors of wealth

may be summed up as follows.—Not to condemn an individual for being moderately rich or retaining moderate riches, since it were folly for such a one to beggar himself under the existing circumstances and conditions of society, as, by doing so, the rich man would become a pauper and remain a pauper because the system of society remained unchanged. Condemnation should be only for those that fight against propaganda for bringing about a change or revolution of the system of society under which inequality and oppression exist; for all who oppress the toilers in any way, and for those that, immoderately rich, do not alleviate with their superfluous wealth the sufferings of the poor in their communities. . . . Having ideas like this and continuing to proclaim revolutionary principles, the Poet made many enemies and would have been imprisoned, perhaps beheaded, but for the clemency of the King, who admired him for his songs and trusted that wisdom would enter the Poet's pate when he saw that no one supported him in his theories, but instead, that the oppressed themselves reviled and scorned him. And so things befell. The Poet was slandered, reviled, and persecuted by the mob. People despoiled the harvests of his farm, set his dwelling afire, thereby forcing him to live in a cave,—and some even waylaid and endeavored to slay him in the dark. But he eluded his would-be assassins, and one day fled the country, leaving his family under the care of his wife's relations, who, having become inimical to him in his misfortune, refused to protect him. So, destitute and broken-hearted, he fled. . . . This is the poem he composed the day of his flight:

"I am leaving this city and shall never return;  
All the days of my life have I dwelt therein,

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And sorrowful, most sorrowful, my life hath been—  
I am leaving this city and shall never return.

"The people in this city are wondrous mean,  
Assassins and robbers perfidious they be;  
They have slandered and sought to dishonor me—  
Like hypocrites and cowards they themselves demean.

"Long have I tarried in this city and land,  
But not for myself—all its riches I spurn;  
Far shall I wander and never return,  
I have shamed this city and graceless land.

"What shall I do with my wasted life?  
Desire and ambition have fled from my soul;  
Shall I play with my years and in lechery roll?  
Nought now matters, since I care not for life.

"For whom shall my soul its benediction breathe?  
On whom shall my thoughts in lovingness dwell?  
On none in this city, sorrowful to tell—  
Scornful of friendship I shall sink back in death.

"Downcast and sorrowful, as I sat in the sun  
With my head in my hands, 'I will go,' I said;  
'I will change my name, so, when I am dead,  
No dishonor unto my body be done.'"

He wandered to a kingdom by the sea where men were known to be kindly and tolerant, and, his fame and story having preceded him, he was welcomed at court and made much of. He was feasted and entertained by noble courtiers, honored by the King with the post of court-poet, and altogether fared so well that he had nothing of which to complain; in fact, he began to grow fat. His muse brightened with the change in his fortunes, and thousands of verses from his pen did flow (but they were charming, innocent songs, be it understood; there was nothing revolutionary expressed in them!) And so he grew more and more in the favor of the court. . . .

A year had he sojourned in this fair land and was on the high-road to affluence, when, unfortunately for him and for her, he saw one day the daughter of the King—a fair damsel, tall and of marvelous beauty. Her he likened unto the lily pale and was so smitten with her charms that love made him bold, and he sent her the following poem, thereby placing his fate in the hands of the Princess, for it would have meant death to the Poet had she been offended:

"Houri of Love of lofty and most beautiful  
Aspect and form, the fairest of earth's lovely maidens,  
Without the benign and healing influence of thy presence  
I am lost, wandering lone and without refuge in by-ways mournful.

"Lo, raised in thine aggrandizement beyond the love  
Of him thy slave, thy servant, the scion of a hated race,  
He can but wait in unhappiness Heaven's will, nor sing enough  
Of songs exalting thyself, thy beauty and marvelous grace.

"But Heaven dreams of thee has sent to comfort me.  
In a dream thou camest to me wandering the hills among:  
'Where hast thou tarried, O my Love, for whom I have waited long?'  
So didst thou say, and enraptured I sank in adoration before thee."

But it seems that the Princess was not offended, rather pleased was she; indeed, curious to relate, she herself was enamoured of her bold and charming lover. His verses were charming—yea, most charming; but the citadel of love she did not capitulate at once. Oh no! ('T would have been most undignified for a royal maid to succumb immediately to the charms of a lover, even though it was the irresistible Poet.) She kept him in suspense for a while, and he, still finding his head upon his shoulders, took courage, rallied the creative forces of his art, and composed this epistle, which he sent to the Princess:

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*(THE EPISTLE)*

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"Fairer than the flowers that grow in the Wonderful Garden is the Lily Pale. For her the Nightingale forsook the Rose, and now silence in the Garden reigns, where formerly the sweetest sounds were heard. . . . The Poet sadly wanders through the garden-ways, the flower of his choice blooming not there. He comes to the Waters, and there he tarries where the Lily her charms unveils. Sweet, caressing words to the Lily he speaks, but she heeds them not. Spies had poisoned her heart against the Poet, and she believes him base, untrue. Many days he comes to the enchanted spot where the Lily blooms, but still she is unrelenting and spurns his love. Greatly distracted, at last the Poet rushes from her and loses himself in the Night. . . . But there comes a day when the Lily, accustomed to his visits, pleasing though she knew it not, herself pines for his presence. Where is the Poet? She rises up, and seeks him in vain, losing herself in the Night.

. . . . .

"But behold! after eons many, the Reincarnation of the beings of the Poet and Lily Pale. . . . Thou, Princess, surely hast perceived the meaning of thy servant:—Princess, thou wert the peerless Lily, and I, thy humble lover, the Poet of olden time. Shall their love again be blighted, and themselves be lost in a darker Night?"

Having received and read the foregoing, the Princess could no longer deny the love she had for the Poet, and

soon they were brought together. Every night they would meet secretly and wander enraptured in a lonely part of the royal gardens; and as a lover the Poet was without peer. . . .

Blithesome they went into the garden-ways,  
Lovingly they glanced into each other's eyes,  
And love was crowned with happy days—  
Life was most sweet in that fair paradise!

The eyes of the Poet on his love did beam,  
A fabric of happiness most fine he reared,  
Transforming into a blissful dream  
The life of the Princess, in seclusion reared.

Singers the legend of this love unfold—  
Never a lover like the Poet hath been;  
Lovers rejoice when the tale is told,  
For themselves they seek comfort therein.

(Now continue we the story for two chapters in verse—  
one chapter rhymed, the other unrhymed.)

—Secret their loving was—therefore more sweet,  
For secrecy could but their bliss enhance  
Through artful stratagems they laid to meet,  
Obtain 'mid courtly throngs a stolen glance.  
But once o'erboldly, foolishly they went,  
Her face the lady 'neath a mask hiding,  
Unto a fête where only lovers went—  
This song far-famed the Poet there did sing:

"Music and laughter, sweet voices and wine,  
The lissome form, the red mouth, eyes divine  
Of my own Love—upon her lap my head,  
And on the sward a royal banquet spread;  
While past our feet the limpid waters flow,  
And o'er our heads the soft, warm breezes blow.

"A fete of lovers 'neath the crescent moon,  
A night of merriment that ends too soon;



Tales of great deeds inspired in blissful love  
The happy wights relate—ye stars above,  
Look down on this our spring-time festival,  
Benignant shine on love's ev'ry vassal!

"The mirth, the laughter, and the merriment  
At other festivals too soon are spent,  
The guests gathered around with secret care  
All saddened are—hollow sounds laughter there!  
But here 'tis all one round of gayeties,  
Lovers' delights, unceasing pleasantries!

"Behind the mask the eyes of my Love shine—  
Oh Well-beloved, the singer's senses pine  
For their reward; the universe shall reel,  
Night change to day when we embark, and steal  
Hence from the bourne of dim reality  
Unto love's fields—celestiality!"

'Twas at this festival Fate stept between;  
Her face the lady thoughtlessly revealed  
For one brief moment—in that moment seen  
By one, rejected lover with heart mean,  
Who them at once betrayed, and their doom sealed.

—Summoned before the King, pleaded in vain  
The sad lovers: in solitude should dwell  
For one long year the lovely royal maid,  
And banished from the land the Poet be.  
Chagrined and mortified that through his love  
Misfortune to his lady had been brought,  
The Poet swore, and wrathfully he sought  
Their base betrayer—him in combat slew.

Fettered and guarded then the Poet was,  
Anon conveyed into his native land  
(To death 'twas sending him, the King believed,  
Himself remaining in his daughter's eyes  
Guiltless). . . . Of these lovers some one has sung:

"A Poet once lived who a maiden loved most wondrous to behold,  
And clandestinely they would meet, this maiden and lover bold;  
A Princess of fairest renown was she, the greatest in the land,  
And only the highest-born nobles might aspire unto her hand.

But too soon Fate stept between  
These lovers fond and true,  
For one eve these twain were seen  
Bidding each other adieu,  
These lovers fond and true,  
Bidding each other adieu,  
Bidding each other adieu, adieu,  
Bidding each other adieu!

"The Poet was banished from the land, and the Princess imprisoned,  
And all this because of a noble's love the lovely Princess shunned;  
This suitor he spied their secret through, and at once he them betrayed,  
But in combat fair the Poet him slew ere he parted from the maid.

Thus too soon Fate stept between  
These lovers fond and true,  
For one eve these twain were seen  
Bidding each other adieu,  
These lovers fond and true,  
Bidding each other adieu,  
Bidding each other adieu, adieu,  
Bidding each other adieu!

"Now, the years have passed, in his native land the Poet sadly dwells,  
Still bemoaning the fate that parted him from the fairest of all damsels;  
And despairing he mourns, for nevermore he his Lady's face shall see,  
For, like a flower that dies bereft of light, so, bereft of love, died she.

Thus too soon Fate stept between  
These lovers fond and true,  
For one eve these twain were seen  
Bidding each other adieu,  
These lovers fond and true,  
Bidding each other adieu,  
Bidding each other adieu, adieu,  
Bidding each other adieu!"

The Poet was taken back to his native land and there imprisoned. The King, his liege lord, however, was a noble man, aged and benign, willing enough to overlook the actions of impulsive youth, and had it proclaimed that he



pardoned the Poet for past errors and restored unto him his former possessions. So back unto his little farm went the Poet a "sadder and a wiser man." He rebuilt his dwelling and for the remainder of his life lived there like a hermit, and with him lived his son and his dear spouse. She, however, could never resign herself to her lowly station, and every day would she reproach the Poet, complaining that he had ruined her life—thereby making him miserable indeed. But for his amour with the Princess she reproached him not at all, for in those days it was customary for a man to love and take in marriage more than one woman. . . . The Poet, although he no longer openly declaimed against superstition and tyranny, was hated by many persons in the community, and having few friends, freely was he persecuted and slandered by his enemies, who contrived to make life miserable for him until the day of his death.

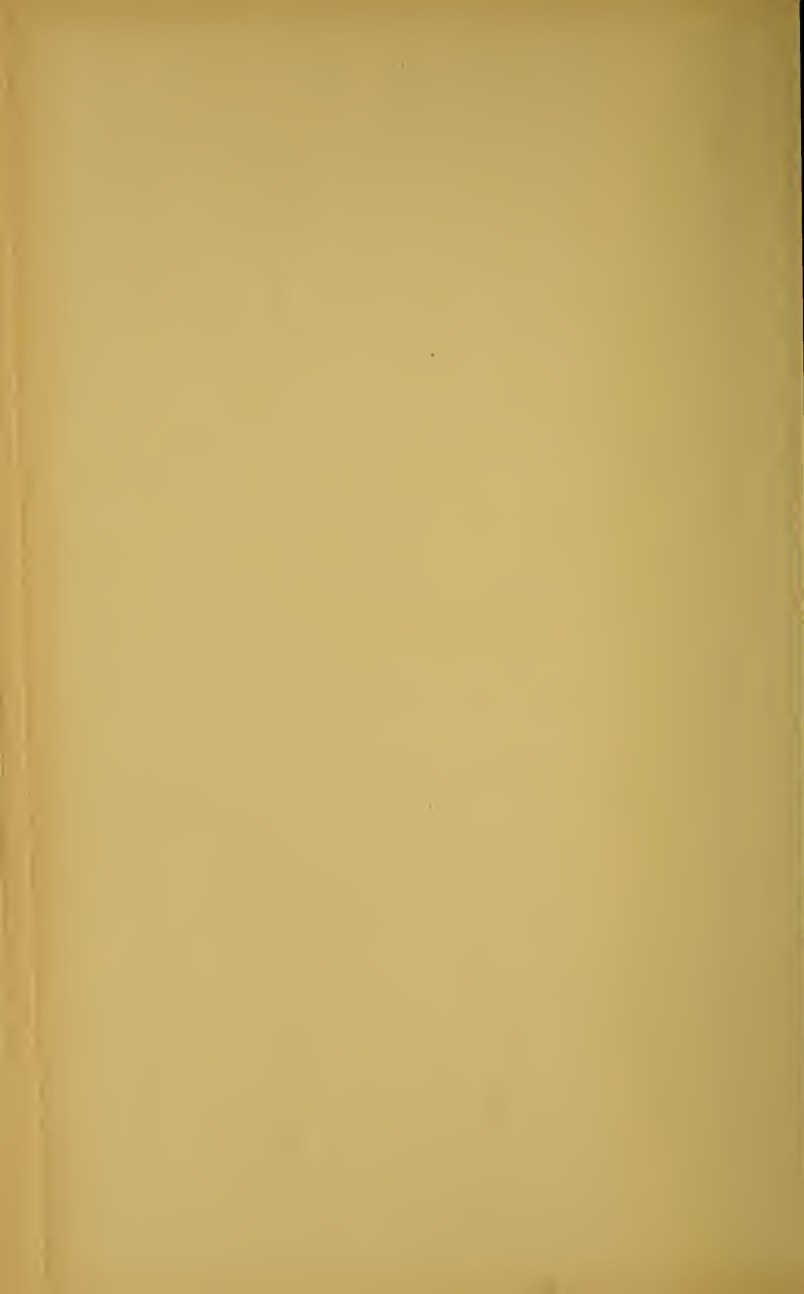
Some of the poems, soliloquies, and conversations included in this book will serve to show how the Poet's mind passed from rebellion to acceptance of life, from desire to renunciation, from egotism to self-forgetfulness, and finally to indifference—indifference to the misery he himself had suffered, indifference to the misery of the world, and indifference to life and the world itself; for, recognizing that nothing is permanent save the unliving illimitable void of space, he learned renunciation of his own right to live and a willingness to let men live as they pleased and believe in the things they believed, since, howsoever they lived and whatsoever they believed, they should die nevertheless, death mercifully ending each one's misery. He became indifferent to the aggregate misery of all living creatures because he had discovered a great truth, which is this:—There never has been and never will be much suffering in the world. Suffering can not be universally abolished;

therefore the same amount of suffering that has always existed will for ever exist—which is no more than the suffering of any one creature of the longest life. Though there were only one creature suffering and all other creatures in the universe happy, contented, and unsuffering, the suffering borne by that one creature were equal to the collective suffering if all other creatures were suffering also. This truth is explained as follows:—Since the life-force or consciousness in any being is identically the same as that in every other being, the consciousness in any one being is the consciousness in every other being; and hence any one being is **every other being**, though unlike in body and in features. Therefore there is only one brief consciousness of suffering, though consciousness is distributed to innumerable beings; for each being is conscious only from its birth and loses its consciousness at death; and its consciousness, not being interlinked to the consciousness of any other being, that same consciousness is but a repetition of the consciousness in every other being. . . . Though he knew this, the Poet recognized that individual suffering remained undiminished nevertheless, and his heart's sympathy and compassion always went out to any man or creature in distress.

Having attained a philosophy like this, the Poet, we can be sure, at no time feared death, and consequently bore his persecutions with unflinching spirit. Could but men and nations of our own time attain to his understanding, they undoubtedly would become more tolerant of one another and cease living at strife, as they continually do.







## **An Ancient Poet**



## An Ancient Poet



One day some friends unto the Poet came.  
"Tell us," they said, "why do you ever write  
Such austere poems, grandiose in thought and form,  
Beyond the comprehension of the many?  
Why do you never choose much simpler themes?  
Although unlike any thing we know of,  
Surely you with your sublime genius  
Could write us many entertaining tales."

The Poet mused awhile, and then he said:  
"Others can do the things that you speak of,  
And do them well; but I, my friends, must do  
The other things—the little I possess  
Doth scarce suffice to publish what I do."



"Daily I pray the Muse to come no more. . . .  
After the daylight hours of toil I sit  
Here indolently by the door and dream,  
And sublime reveries then come to me.  
And as I dream, the Muse takes on the form  
Of the superb and marvelous woman  
Whose heaven-born beauty long has me enthralled—  
And oh, most sorrowful she speaks to me:

'Of all the themes I sent to thee,  
How few canst thou recall!

Shall those forgot return to thee?  
 Nay, lost for aye are all!  
 Behold, I wander far, and men,  
 Entranced, welcome me in;  
 I come here to my most loved haunt,  
 And all is dark within!

"I do not ask for praise of my writings—  
 Selfish and vain were I praise to demand  
 (Wherefore aggrandize me for aught I do?);  
 Enough for me to know my words be known,  
 Nor this nor aught else now can me elate."



A variation of the master-theme  
 Are all the notes together strung;  
 The broken string resounds discordantly,  
 And in anguish away is flung.  
 The burden of the master-singer's singing  
 Is but sorrow eternally,  
 Yet to the singer himself is wearying  
 Its unmeaning misery.

The singer, martyred to great misery,  
 In the beginning sorrowed sung,  
 For the fatal gift of poesy,  
 Like a cloud, o'er his young life hung.  
 But now wise the singer and no more fearing,  
 And in spirit a deity,  
 A wondrous lay he shall sing disavowing  
 The songs of past misery.





"See how I overcome difficulties:  
Tales and legends in sonnets do I tell,  
Imitating no one—a poetry  
Stript of false metaphor, my friends, is mine.  
Some say, 'Wherefore write more? all hath been writ;  
The mind of man no more things can explore,  
Since none remain.' He who a genius is  
Can yet excel, pursuing his own way.

"And change unfailingly with each age comes,  
All things improve, all arts—e'en poetry;  
Accomplishments and learning for which men  
In olden times reveréd were, are now  
By youths mastered, by many in the land."



Once a misanthrope to the Poet said:  
"Of all earth's creatures men I love the least,  
So few there are that are not treacherous,  
Hard-hearted hypocrites, selfish and vain;  
Ungenerous are all. Other creatures,  
Whom I do love, have none of men's failings;  
Thou, Poet, know'st the truth of what I say—  
For men 'thou laborest; are they grateful?"

Said the Poet: "My friend, couldst thou transform  
Thyself into one of earth's dumb creatures  
And live among them, thou wouldst judge them too.  
'Tis true that for my writings I am scorned,  
Yet not for gratitude such things I do."



One day a critic to the Poet came.  
"Hast seen," he said, "how few achieve fine work?  
How I belabor all and bid them cease  
The wretched vaporings of empty minds?"  
"My friend," the Poet said, "thou doest wrong.  
Grant every man his efforts to create;  
Wouldst thou not feel aggrieved if others should  
Belittle thy labors, as thou their own?"

"The desire of man, his vague strivings to be  
*Künstler*" (artist), "poet, master of art,  
Tend but to purify and elevate;  
Art's humblest votaries should be welcomed  
At its fair shrine of work and endeavor."



Nurture the lowly flower, behold how soon  
The freshness of blooming life shall it unfold;  
Neglect the same flower, it shall quickly die,  
Disconsolately pining in darkness away.  
The heart is a flower hidden away,  
Neglected, and crushed by unseeing feet;  
Relentless hands deal it many blows,  
Nor reck of the anguish they bring thereby.

The poet is a flower of the genius-seed,  
Uprising from soil that has been shunned:  
If in cruel neglect ye let it pine,  
The flower shall die; but if nurtured kindly,  
Its radiance shall flood and astound the world.



Oh the Lily! she brings dissension between  
The Rose and Nightingale—hapless pair—  
Because "Than thyself is the Rose more fair,"  
Says the Breeze; "her equal has ne'er been seen."  
With jealousy poignant, in her mantle charmed  
The Lily her beauty pale arrays,  
And lures the singing-bird from the garden-ways;  
Unveils then her beauty the Rose, alarmed.

But in vain! Heart-broken, then messages sweet  
To the faithless bird she sends; return  
He will not—both he and the Lily spurn  
These her love, and they crush them 'neath their feet!  
In carousals drunken, unashamed these twain  
Themselves do disport before the world;  
Invectives, ah, many! at them are hurled,  
And they laugh, till the Rose to die is fain.

Now, the Lily no love for the bird she knows;  
Her charm proven, she wearies of him,  
And back to the garden-alleys now dim  
She sends him, and sadly from her he goes.  
The Rose is forgiving, and gladly her lord  
She hails and welcomes, though sad her heart  
(A vow she has made ne'er from him to part),  
And speaks many a sweet, caressing word.

But the Nightingale sings in the land, forlorn;  
Plaintive and sad are his melodies;  
The Rose bows her head, for with anguish torn  
Is her heart, and she weeps—alas, she dies!



Did I, who love this long while had forsworn,  
Think I should e'er encounter love once more,  
That I should rise happy, greeting each morn,  
My heart with love's elation bubbling o'er?  
The fates across my lonely path have thrown  
A wealth of love from which I may not turn;  
The future days with fairest flowers seem strewn,  
And only blissful joys can I discern.

But stealthily, with caution great, will I  
This flame approach, fan it most patiently,  
Nor probe too deep, lest (Heaven forbid!) it die.  
Perhaps my fears are vain, perhaps in me  
The heart yet long shall thrill and throb gladly.



Couldst thou but know the dreams I have woven,  
And weave from day to day, in which thyself  
The central figure shinest, to thee were proven  
My love for thee, e'en as unto myself.  
And though my love be vain, unreal to thee,  
Before thyself still loving I should fall,  
Thankful and glad thy radiant beauty  
The power had my spirit 'to enthrall.

For now once more, as long ago, I dream,  
Thrill with emotions indefinable,  
And raptured soar unto realms wonderful;  
My life's whole being by thine eyes' bright beam  
Has been transformed, as by a magic spell.



My dear Love, I thought last night that I should die;  
The poignant grief I feel has brought me low,  
And all I suffer makes me weep and sigh  
In thinking of yourself, whom I love so.  
Your dear image is enshrined within my heart,  
And your presence can alone disperse my gloom;  
But how hopeless is my wish!—must I depart,  
Despairing and unloved, into the tomb?

Only sad lovers here on earth can know  
And understand the tortures of the damned,  
For they, like them, suffer eternal woe;  
And greater far than sufferings of the damned  
Mine own have been, and each day keener grow.



Sad sighs the evening breeze, my Love,  
As, passing through the meadows fair,  
It bears to thee my plaint of love,  
Heedless of my despair.  
Weary the breeze with its service,  
At last may come no more,  
But sighing go where lovers' bliss  
Its fragrance can restore.

Thou art so fair thy beauty pains;  
I throw me down here now and pine,  
And in my soul such anguish reigns  
As though it were divine!  
Ah, come! and still my heart's longing  
With largess of delight,  
Or, Love, this night I am coming  
To take by storm love's right!



What sorrow, Poet, is this? what strange sadness?  
Oh, whence this emotion? that thy heart bleedeth,  
Thy spirit cowering 'neath heaviness. . . .  
What revery is this that through thy soul sweepeth? . .  
The desire for the Beloved in thy soul hovereth,  
The thrall unto love hast thou become,  
Whose enthrallment there is no fleeing from;—  
Like a lodestone its prey, love thy being rendeth.

What poem from the void shall thy art conjure?—  
No talisman charmed, save the Beloved's face,  
The phantom of death can now conquer:  
About the Beloved, with her nameless grace,  
For thee, Beauty's slave, there is such glamour.



O wonderful River of this sweet, fair land,  
Let thy waters for ever fertilize the ground!  
Let them come pure and gently from thy source  
through the sand,  
Giving life, as they flow, to desert places around.  
Yea, flow onward, O River, from thy source to the  
sea!—  
Though thou be threatened with ruin by the scorching  
sun,  
And lying oft buried, still, O River, enfree  
Thyself and flow onward till thy course be run!

Overflow not thy banks when thou'rt swollen with  
rains  
And turbulent flowest, a tumultuous flood,  
For the fields and the gardens and the fertile plains,  
That so many dangers have, O River, withstood,

By thy waters' overflow were laid waste, and for aye:  
Deserted, this so lovely region the hungry  
And encroaching desert sands soon should sweep away.  
Oh, betray not, River, our hope and trust in thee.

. . . . .  
So I, when I rest me at even and sing,  
So I pray to thee, O River, when my heart is sad,  
Filled with gentle sadness and deepest longing—  
So I pray to thee, O River, when my heart is sad.



Where once was a desert now a paradise blooms!  
See how lovely is all in the dawning light,  
And lovelier still when in the east there looms,  
Ne'er-failing, the sun, radiant and bright.  
Thou'lt behold then before thee the magic scene  
That from river to mountains unfolds each day,  
And still thou art sad. . . . Can nought intervene  
To banish thy sorrow for aye?

Here are gardens abounding in beautiful flowers,  
Here are meadows and fields the most fruitful and fair,  
And shadowy lanes leading to beauteous bowers—  
Sweet rest and repose await thee there.  
There is nought here to weary, thou livest at ease,  
To charm thee to slumber or banish thine ire,  
Comes the nightingale's song floating upon the breeze—  
What more couldst thou have, or thy heart desire?





A beautiful woman rushes through the throng  
 Hovering about the gates, reaches the stair,  
 And thereupon, loudly weeping, she falls,  
 Beating the marble with her lovely hands.  
 The spectators behold her grief-stricken,  
 And marvel at this act of great lady—  
 There is the bier of him that died that morn;  
 His name murmurs she and expires anon.

The marvelous shall come to pass through love—  
 Whoso hath loved can understand this tale;  
 This lovely woman loved and was beloved,  
 But he, her lover, dreamer of strange dreams,  
 Forsook life that extinct his race might be.



*Grant them happy reunion  
 In a heaven of trusting souls!*

So sang the minstrel, ending his song in tears,  
 At the grave of them, sad lovers who had died,  
 From life into death passing, driven by fears,  
 To whom love's cup of bliss had been denied. . . .  
 The sovereign remedy of love is hope—  
 Hope gone, the sublimest passion soon must die;  
 With relentless fate the lovers can not cope,  
 But victims fall unto their destiny.

The reincarnation of their beings sang  
 The minstrel, sighing; among the glades of heaven,  
 There should they meet, and unto them be given  
 A rapturous love far greater than each pang  
 Of woe suffered be from remembrance driven.





A love-sick maiden speaks of her lover,  
A dark, fine, handsome noble of the town;  
Most fortunate she deems herself his love  
And kind loving attentions to receive:  
"Ever caressingly my lover loves,  
No frown across his countenance doth pass;  
I seek him in the night, he welcomes me,  
Forsaking all amusements with his friends.

"I come upon him in the street by day,  
And though surrounded by great company,  
He, unashamed, with gracious face, doth come,  
Speaking, so all can hear, caressing words. . . .  
For him my love is deep and can not die."



A wandering Arab tells this tale of heaven:  
Amongst its legions of blissful spirits came  
A being that entered sad, and so remained—  
Heaven's marvelous wonders wrought on her no charm.  
And lo, Allah great himself waited on her,  
Endeavoring with promises fair grief to allay,  
But still in heaven she mourned, ever turning  
Earthwards her eyes; there was her love pining.

And because of him, the marvel of the world,  
Heaven's fairest courtesies unto her were shown—  
The greatest of mortals of all time was he;  
His sorrows and deeds the walls of heaven had shaken;  
Though on earth persecuted, in heaven he should rule.



One day the Poet told his friends this tale:  
—There dwelt in an Eastern land of yore a man;  
A poet, he anon conceived a work  
Sublime and thereafter lived but for it;  
Forgetting friends and kin, long years he toiled.  
At length the much-proclaimed work was done,  
The printed book was ready for the world,  
Which he esteemed above all things in life.

The morrow came. With flying feet he sped  
Into the streets this wondrous book to spread—  
All men were dead. . . . He wandered through the  
land—  
All men were dead. . . Then he in madness died. . . .  
—Thus Heaven, my friends, punished this wretched  
man.



There was a land abounding in great wealth,  
Its virile people through ages endured,  
Accumulating with each year more wealth,  
Until the poorest man therein was rich.  
The envy of surrounding lands it was,  
And wise men prophesied of its downfall,  
Saying it should become the prize of foes—  
And lo, in a short time it was despoiled.

All being rich, at last no one would work,  
Pleasures wasting demoralized them all;  
Then came, whilst they were fighting 'mongst them-  
selves  
To see whoso should work, whoso be lord,  
Their foes upon them, conquered, made them slaves.



Once a false friend sought to lead into sin  
The Poet chaste—after a wine-carouse,  
Thinking his wits were fuddled with the wine,  
“Now let us go to So-and-So,” he said.  
The Poet would not go; the other said:  
“Lo, there a damsel will sit on thy lap,  
Caress thee as the sad sad music dies;  
Thou’lt spend the night in such sweet, strange  
delights!”

“My friend,” the Poet said, “fain would I go,  
And spend with thee the night in strange delights—  
But no! . . . Imaginings lofty,  
Whose slave I am, restrain me, and I do  
Like as I should in an ideal state.”



Ah, cease all thoughts of joy and sweet delight!  
Bid yon musicians cease their playing, too—  
Detain me not, dear friends and damsels bright,  
Open yon door, make way and let me through! . . .  
Ten thousand deaths! 'tis solitude I crave!  
Once more sad grief is hovering in my soul;  
I am o'erborne as if lying in my grave—  
Strange darknesses, O friends, around me roll.

Aha! false friend, that look'st askance at me,  
I read thy thoughts, the meaning of that leer—  
But ho! What hoof-beats sound so sinister? . . .  
The omen's meant for thee and not for me:  
A funeral cortege passes now—dost hear?



My friends, I have returned from the city,  
Yea, fled therefrom as from a pestilence;  
No longer could I bear its misery,  
Its piteous sights and madness drove me hence.  
Wander through it some night, my friends, and see  
Hovels and palaces, pleasure and pain—  
The monster view in its entirety;  
Like me, ye shall return, yet go again.

How sinister the city looks at night!  
In crooked streets, hidden by shadows, prowls  
Dark men intent on murder, rapine foul;  
And here and there, under a corner-light,  
Importunes one a maid in piteous plight.



"Bow down thy head before yon old gray man,  
With reverend hands assist him on his way;  
Though loudly, speak not harshly to him, pray,  
His senses age has dimmed, well-nigh decayed.  
Humble he is, a lowly 'toil-worn slave,  
Yet in him seest thou, boy, the type of Man;  
Gray is his head and beard—honor thou him  
For the long years many that he has borne."

Thus did the Poet once rebuke a youth—  
A wastrel profligate of the city—  
Who scoffed at, ridiculed a feeble slave  
Plodding with weary feet adown the road. . . .  
The youth thereafter mocked no one again.



"Poet, dost thou approve of the judgment  
That Solomon, the poet and wise king,  
Rendered unto two women disputing  
Over a child that each claimed as her own?  
Each said the other stole it in the night,  
And Solomon bade a soldier cleave it  
In twain, since none could say whose child it was;  
One of the two relinquished then her claim.

"And Solomon unto her gave the child,  
Saying only its mother could forego  
Possession of rather than see it dead."  
"My friends," the Poet said, "the other wept,  
And she its rightful mother was, I ween."



An image sad rises before mine eyes:  
Within a cloud, shrouded in shadows, roll  
A throng of mortals in great agony—  
Bowed down in supplication, they do plead.  
Fixt and immovable, but part revealed,  
Above them raised, in contemplation sad,  
Their judge muses (o'er his decree their mourn);  
Most sorrowful his eyes—and lo, he speaks:

"The sad entreaty of your eyes doth burn. . .  
Great patience have I, but this too hath end—  
Unpardonable the things ye have done;  
Because of them, into death's darkness go—  
Guilty of them, base ye would e'er remain."



Each day what sad vexations must I bear,  
Complaints from one who here should solace me,  
Reproaches, that, unceasingly falling,  
My spirit harass, troubled sore enough.  
In bitterness I labor and subsist;  
Pitfalls are laid for me by wretches mean,  
And none to grieve, I seem to fall therein,  
But my heart bleeds—not for myself but them.

Thus as I live on here from day to day,  
Sorrowed, toil-worn, mocked at, scorned and reviled,  
Myself do fall from righteousness and sin,  
Passing perplexed through many changing moods,  
Until I question which is the right one.



And thou that bearest more in one sad day  
Than other mortal bears within a year,  
To failure art foredoomed—wherefore, then, stay?  
Flee hence, ere death descend upon thee here.  
The time is now—dilly-dally no more!  
Within thy grasp only one thing remains;  
Thine enemies, until thy heart's blood stains  
The earth, will watch for thee outside thy door.

Wherefore delay? Foil Fate, who with thee plays,  
Permits herself with thy life pleasantries,  
Rolling in merriment o'er tricks she plays;  
Good fortune would she send in thy last days—  
How wouldst thou bear the last of her ironies?



" 'Tis a pity that head of thine should rot!"  
(So spake in irony his faithful spouse)  
"That brow fine-formed, thine eyes mysterious  
Betoken the sublime poet thou art!"  
—Clothed he was many a time in rags—  
The disorderly revered not a greatness so clad;  
They despised and reviled him in his distress,  
Nor believed in his goodness or fame.

"Poet," the Muse would whisper to him  
In the moments of darkness, when he was sad,  
"Heed not thou the words of the ignorant!  
Mournest thou o'er the meanness and lowness of men?  
Not worth they thy tears—leave them to their fate!"



"Dear Love," she said to him one day, "I fear  
That soon there will be none thou may'st call friend;  
Thy first and truest friend thou treatedst so  
That he will ne'er, ne'er come to thee again.  
Another enemy hast thou in him—  
Oh yes, the most bitter and vindictive,  
One who will undermine and slander thee;  
Lo, who besides myself is now thy friend?"

Said the Poet: "My cherished little one,  
I tell thee that thou dost not understand;  
'Twas not a friend, an enemy I spurned."  
And pointing then to cat and dog, he said,  
"Wouldst know my friends? Behold, here are my  
friends!"





Can one who long has pondered and grown wise,  
A being whose whole life has been despoiled  
Through sorrows and misfortunes, miseries  
Deplorable and sad—can such a one,  
Bereft of hope, weary of all and die,  
Though dreams—alluring, tantalizing dreams  
Of love and happiness—bid him 'to stay,  
And wrest his stolen joy from life away?

If by some miracle one such survive  
The shipwreck of his being, he shall be  
A demon or an angel of mercy;  
If demon, he shall weary of the cause  
Of his sorrow holy, and scorn all men.



How contradictory are men's natures!  
Men prophesy of, pray for, the advent  
Of one who shall emancipate their minds,  
Lead them from superstition dark away.  
And when he come, the fearless and the true,  
Whose logic simple no one can confute,  
How thank him men for opening their eyes?  
With persecution's stones they drive him hence.

Were I to manifest my secret self,  
Reveal the knowledge of this being mine,  
I should lead those to say that understand,  
"Thou lead'st us in a maze wherein we die!" . . .  
The time's not yet. Shall 't come never? So be it!





A dream without comparison—so fair—  
Had I last night, and still I pine from it:  
I dreamed I was released from earthly care  
And soared unto a realm surpassing bright.  
There was I welcome made by beings kind,  
Spent with great suffering, I rested me;—  
Ah, how my wasted heart and wearied mind  
Thrilled 'neath the minist' rings of that mercy!

"Long hast thou struggled sad on the earth rude,  
But now no more need'st thou bear misery—  
Forget thy sorrow in this solitude.  
Here canst thou rest, no fears to trouble thee."  
So spake all there, those angels of pity.



. . . . . Now see  
Thine edifice of cherished hopes come down!—  
Of what avail to struggle if for thee,  
O wounded lion, jackals lie in wait?  
From every side, at every turn they come.  
They come—and panting for thy death they come!  
And thou 'gainst them wouldst struggle—thou?

Ho! ho!

Base lion, be benevolent and die!  
Depart thou from among the dastard crew.

Yea, die, gladly relinquishing thy life;  
Each spirit proud, defying, in the world  
To fall is doomed—those mean in spirit join  
To torture and amaze it, and distress. . . .  
Now for the fray—and bloody make thou it!



For each confidence there is betrayal—  
Honor, conscience are now unknown,  
Trust is misplaced, every mortal  
The bond of friendship doth disown.  
Thou'lt seek in vain for probity or truth—  
Baseness and perfidy thou'lt find;  
All, without pity or shame or ruth,  
In wickedness dwell resigned.

Yet question not wherefore nought is true,  
To death's portal all things go;  
Nor evil, understanding its acts, shall rue  
The past—Philosopher, if not so,  
What difference? nought receives its due.



Surely the gods, from their sublime, far heights  
Beholding the world and seeing men cling  
Through years of dolor to troublous life—  
Surely the gods wonder and sigh!  
See how all men fear the approach of death,  
What terror betray over each pain—  
Through life they all go building in vain,  
And as blindly go as they came.

But him love the gods who cares not for life,  
Who for nought striving, over nought repines;  
Indifferent, dies desireless and free,  
By thoughts on what lies beyond unmoved,  
To whom Creation as well were not.



No, no, my friend, I do not hate, I love!  
Separation I placed 'twixt me and thee  
Because I fathomed well (thou knowest whereof  
I speak) that heart of thine. Come not near me!  
—Thou goest now to each night's revelry  
Gloomy and sad—'tis so with me also;  
Such pleasure in each other's company  
Found we as none other's can e'er bestow.

My friend, thou wast a churl, a witless churl.  
It seemed as if Heaven created us  
Each for the other—why, then, didst thou hurl  
The star of friendship from thy life? In thus  
Acting, my friend, thou wast a churl—a churl!



*To exhilarate thee  
And set thy pulses throbbing  
With the fever of desire!*

For this, Mortal, the cup-bearers bring wine—  
Drink! thou that this long while in grief wert lost;  
What though the price be high, it is divine,—  
Though thou for it hast toiled, forget the cost. . . .  
From instruments harmonious music flows;  
Thou drinkest, and forgettest all grievance,—  
To friend and foe alike thy greeting goes,  
Nought mars the precious worth of these moments.  
In drunkenness thy true self dost reveal,  
Hardness and unforbearance disappear,  
Anxiety for self no more dost feel;  
Acceptest fate and life—without a fear  
Away from thy mortality dost steal.



Speaking of him one day, an enemy  
Sought to traduce him to his dearest friend:  
"Thou knowest So-and-So is a scoundrel"—  
The other quick answered, "He is sublime!  
Thou knowest he doth quarrel with his spouse  
(Quarrels happen among the most refined);  
Provoked thereo'er one day, to him she said,  
'Tell me, dear Love, what I can do to please thee.

"Answered the Poet in carressing voice:  
'Tis winter, and 'tis bitter cold without;  
Give shelter unto cat and dog sometimes.'  
His spouse was mortified, for she had thought  
Selfish his wish would be, selfish and vain."



So like a restless lion in his den,  
We see him wandering to and fro each day;  
His eyes with a repellent glare in them  
Look on the things around him with distrust.  
We tremble whensoever they light on us,  
In trepidation by that threshold pass,  
Fearing that he perchance may have divined  
The evil things our hearts 'gainst him harbour.

Yet we, that are his enemies, can say  
He is the most honorable of men;  
His friends do laud and love and honor him,  
Say he is strange because of some sorrow.  
—Report like this his fair foes spread about.



For many days, with heart wearied and sad,  
With mind distraught with weariness and pain,  
I am morose and think most gloomy thoughts,  
Despise some men, distrust, and judge them hard;  
And as the memories of bitter days  
Come over me, when men sought me to harm,  
I sigh because not one of the whole pack  
Acted in fair and honorable way.

And then anon something will change my mood—  
Some sweet music, a sight of misery  
Will force the gates of mercy in my soul,  
And therefrom flow a stream flooding the world;  
And then to please base men, I do their will.



Yea, as a god I rise above the world  
And fathom the souls of all dwelling therein,  
And from yon far height look down on them that,  
hurled  
Into confusion's depths, weep o'er discovered sin.  
And I bless them, hearts that grieve—with them I  
mourn,  
To each weak distress my heart's compassion flows,  
Bringing counsel sweet and laving eyes that burn  
With supplication 'neath agonizing woes.

"Say ye, then, what ye desire should be revealed!"  
So I cry aloud; "within my soul a stream  
Of divine knowledge doth flow, and it may yield  
Balm and comfort." And wandering then I seem  
With the unhappy through a heavenly field.



"Poet," some said to him one day, "we fear  
That trouble soon will spread o'er this fair land;  
The people's burdens evermore increase,  
And its oppressors become yet worse withal."  
"My friends," the Poet said "those that oppress,  
Possessing superabundance while around  
Their brothers toil in misery and want,  
Do grievous wrong and feel at heart ashamed."

"My friends," continued he, "all men await  
A land where none oppress, an ideal state—  
Let but the earth endure, and it shall come.  
Shall come! for the oppressed, murmuring now,  
Shall rise, and overthrow oppressive rule."



A land where all dwell in loving-kindness,  
Where labor is given to all to do,  
The laborers laboring leisurely  
So that they may breathe and their health retain;  
A land without beggar or ragman poor,  
Where all live as brothers and have the same rights,  
Where, 'neath the protection of a rule benign,  
'Gainst hunger and mis'ry all are secure.

This land of the future the Poet sings  
(Confusion to all who oppose it here),  
Where the wearied may rest and find repose—  
A land that is ruled with a rule benign,  
A land that is bright with happiness!



Pity the downtrodden, they live in fear,  
They dwell in an unending abject state,  
Their bread bitter is eaten with their tears,  
For them the beauteous earth holdeth no charms. . . .  
If so it be that some of them revolt,  
Whoso on them inflicteth misery  
Shall blanch before their eyes, that fiercely glow  
With hatred undying, and mayhap fall.

But him they shall worship, weeping glad tears,  
Their saviour true, he that their chains shall break—  
Yea, him they shall worship! . . . In suffering great,  
From earliest time the world's burdens they bore—  
From earliest time the mean on earth have ruled.



Laborest thou most hard from morn to close of day?  
Knowest thou hunger? thy children and thy kin?  
Findest thou thyself forlorn in thine old age,  
And destitute and deserted in sickness?  
Believest thou, too, thine enemies are those  
That the riches of earth unto themselves secure  
(Not the heavens mute, that sorrowful look down),  
Despoiling thee of thy right, a tranquil life?

Yet hate not thy lords and masters for their deeds,  
Unworthy are they alike of love or hate—  
The meanest and best conspire to burden thee;  
Disdaining their riches, turn from them away,  
Ungenerous souls through love of gold made base.





O Servants of a hard, trying task-master,  
 Toiling with bodies bared 'neath the hot sun,  
 Bearing with tearless eyes the whip's lashes,  
 Hungered rising nightly from repast meagre,—  
 The nights so long and hot, in hovels dismal  
 Restless ye toss, finding little repose,  
 Fevered, sweating, in agony ye moan—  
 Hopeless, despondent to your tasks ye go.

Your lot ye oft compare with your masters',  
 Astounded learn that your masters repine,  
 Their fate bemoan, knowing not happiness—  
 O Servants of a hard, trying task-master,  
 How ye could prize the riches they betray!



"O soldiers of an army fearlessly  
 Penetrating into a hostile land,  
 Encountering armies, every one  
 With soldiers fierce and numbering more than ye,—  
 Oh, say whence ye derive your peerless strength?  
 Are ye immortal that on battle's eve  
 Yourselves so unconcerned lay down to sleep,  
 Though ye be far from home and all succor?"

"What though there be hundreds against our one,  
 The hostile ranks shall break, and form no more—  
 Our captain, he is here, he led us here!  
 And wheresoe'er he goes, there go we too—  
 Unto our homes he shall bring us once more."





"O Poet, men know not what to believe;  
The world is burdened with conflicting creeds,  
Which bring chaos, confusion in our minds,"  
Thus spake some friends to the Poet one day. . . .  
"My friends, assure yourselves of one thing first:  
If by your reasoning ye demonstrate  
Unto yourselves that the God do exist,  
Trouble yourselves no more, your fate is fixt."

"My friends," continued he, "all men's wranglings  
Can not create or uncreate the God,  
Can not unmake or make an after-life—  
That which exists—exists. If God there be,  
Himself at the right time shall he reveal."



"My friends, the world is so immensely big,  
And we no more than particles therein,  
That the fair mind, the all estimating,  
Lacking more knowledge, baffled gives up hope.  
Say, even though the world through God exist,  
That his fiat control our destinies,  
Of what avail to men living were this,  
Since misery still their lot on earth remains?

"If so it be his fiat rules all things,  
If not within his plan that we should live,  
Extinguishment of each life's consciousness  
He sees without a qualm; if otherwise,  
Fear not—his face ye shall behold anon."



Awakening from death, resplendent realms  
Thou passest into, and upon thine ear  
Sounds ravishing do fall; within those realms  
Behold'st thou all whom thou on earth held'st dear.  
The peaceful throngs therein a moment stay  
Their march enchanted, and they smile on thee;  
Thou joinest them, with them wand'rest for aye,  
With thy beloved, in changeless ecstasy. . . .

This dream, Mortal, how often hast thou dreamed,  
Or dwelt upon? How thou hast hated men  
Who laughed at thee—fiendish ones who deemed  
Thy dream hopeless, and tantalized thee then  
With "Were't not sweet if true what thou hast  
dreamed?"



Thy life may be miserable, overfull of tribulations and trials, but still thou canst rejoice; for, Mortal, the journey is not overlong, and at its end is death. . . . Consider well, then, this life; and though thou fearest and art convinced that there is nothing more to come after death, still canst thou reason thus:—Inexplicable and indefinable are the reason for, and cause of, the existence of the tangible universe; therefore, even because they are baffling to thy mortal understanding, there is yet some vital knowledge that thou knowest not: something is behind the mystery, thou concludest, that may yet belie thy present hopeless reasonings.



—One evening there came a stranger-man  
(Care-worn he looked and sad) of darkest mien.  
"Poet," he said, "overfull my life has been  
Of sorrow, grief, misfortune, and sickness.  
This evening as I with bleeding feet  
Came wandering adown the stony road,  
A poor man saw my plight and pitied me,  
Brought me here to thy dwelling for the night. . . .  
My spirit, once so proud, has been broken,  
I am aweary of my misery;  
I think on one I loved that now is dead,  
And o'er my being spent such anguish comes  
That I, O friend, would fain give up the ghost."

—The Poet entertained the stranger-guest,  
Comfortable he made him, food and wine  
Before him set; the stranger, having dined,  
His history told, and sorrowful it was.  
And as his tale of woe he was ending,  
"Poet, thy lute now bring to me," he said;  
"I too a singer am—sorrow-inspired,  
Sorrow would sing." And then he played and sang:

"Shines there no star in heaven benign o'er me?  
Falls there no ray from its fair splendor bright?  
Is there no voice to give counsel friendly  
And guide the soul in persecuted flight?  
"There falls no ray! no word of hope loving  
Comes from its depths to soothe and solace me!"  
I cry aloud, as, anguished and gasping,  
Onward, still on, through barren life I flee.

"Then lo! beyond the fearsome gloom I see  
Lights of marvelous radiance that shine  
On forms celestial, clothed in strange beauty;  
And there the hands of Death beckon and sign,  
Promising me rest and tranquillity."

He ceased—and then, "Poet, once more I sing.  
Hearken to me; this song I sing to her  
Now in the grave lying, sent thence by care:

"If nevermore thine eyes on me should dwell,  
As was their wont, their gaze so soft, serene;  
If ne'er this heart its tale to thee may tell,  
And if in vain I mourn, of thee unseen,—  
Then, Most-beloved, farewell!  
For evermore farewell!

"Of grief unending, sorrow, misery,  
Of life of anguish o'er thy sufferings,  
Of hatred for the world, that brought to thee  
Things bitter and made vain all thy strivings—  
Of these I would tell thee!  
Ah, Most-beloved, tell thee!

"Forlorn, disconsolate, and despondent  
I sought thy grave some ray of hope to find;  
The night loomed dark when desolate I went  
Hence from thy grave, weeping—and resigned  
My prayers to thee I sent!  
My prayers to thee I sent!"

The singer ceased, and, fainting, fell gasping,  
By grief overcome, upon the bare, hard floor.

—The Poet,—sorrowful in truth was he;  
Compassion filled his breast for the stranger,—  
He tenderly did minister to him  
And back to life him brought—but pale as death  
And death's mad fears upon the stranger came;  
"Poet," he cried, "now sing to me a song  
Exemplifying my sad, wretched state,  
To comfort me and make me unafraid."

*(The Song the Poet Sang)*

"On whom calls the slave toiling in pain and anguish, sore oppressed,  
When in vain, desolate and forlorn, prostrate, weeping he mourns,  
Praying for deliverance?  
Who then hears his rending prayers?  
Lo, broken and crushed he dieth.

"And thyself now, O Life, art like a fortress that is fast falling  
Before the furious onslaught of a most hard and numerous foe:  
The impending doom is near  
(Hasten ye deliverers!  
In the plain ye have tarried long.)

"Then as the sunshine from the parting nether heavens long-clouded  
streameth,  
And the victorious hosts before them sweep away the insolent foe,  
What desolation there is seen!  
How flow then the bitter tears!  
The fortress in ruins lieth. . . .

"Then at the last, shalt thou, O Being, spent with the years of dreadful  
toil and turmoil,  
Be unmanned, weeping bitterly o'er the past, and sad to go?  
Make of death a festival!  
(Let the Poet counsel thee)  
Make of death a festival!

"Not in appearance pitiable, with suffering crazed, and gibbering,  
At the festival shalt thou, O long-suffering Soul, appear;  
But with thy cheeks flushed with wine,  
And thy spirit undismayed,  
Unto death thyself surrender."

The Poet sang unto the stranger thus;  
And potent was its influence on him,  
This song's. . . . Frenzied no more, speech clear,  
The stranger conversed yet awhile, then slept;  
His body in the morn was cold and dead.



The King unto his courtiers once said:  
"I prize the loyalty of my servants,  
But that I prize the most of him that serves,  
In base courtly intrigues taking no part.  
And he that is a man steadfast and true  
Will not degrade himself—'twere vain to try  
By all seductive arts him to seduce;  
Life unto him sans honor is worthless.

"Be like your king! No interest his heart rules;  
Sad life ready at all times to renounce,  
To self he panders not, unguarded goes. . . .  
Inevitable is death—from this we learn  
Courage, wisdom—to life, indifference."



Under flaring flambeau the courteous King,  
Surrounded by his courtiers sate sad:  
"Now, who among my friends assembled here  
Is generous enow with me to die?  
Who that 'neath wine's exhilaration feels  
Contempt of life and death, profound, serene,  
Extinguishment of his life's consciousness  
Can listlessly supine bear and embrace?"

The King that night was sad; 'twas the first time  
He made request so mad of any one  
(His honor was at stake—unknown the cause).  
All prized too well to give it up dear life—  
The King went forth alone, returned no more.



The captive pining in his slavish state,  
With heart buoyed up by hope of sweet revenge,  
Bears patiently affronts and injustice,  
Lures his tormentors on to meaner deeds.  
"Commensurate with present acts shall be  
Their punishment—let them plunge deep!" he sighs;  
"A day of retribution, reckoning,  
Shall come and they in vain for mercy pray."

Thus, pining 'neath a cruel yoke, many  
With dreams of vengeance dire their fate lighten,  
Consecrating their hearts' whole strength thereto;  
Impassioned, in their solitude they cry,  
"Revenge! Oh, passion noble is Revenge!"



In this so lovely world,  
Wherein we live and die,  
Why should we live at strife  
And not most lovingly?  
Oh, lovely as the dawn  
And fair as stars of night  
Is Love, the solacer,  
Benignant and bright!

To whomsoe'er 'tis given,  
This privilege divine,  
To dispense light from heaven,  
In sorrow long did pine.  
Then come, gather around,  
Ye dwelling in darkness,  
And from Love's flowing fount  
Your lives fill with gladness.





At Death's door the sublime warrior lay.  
Oh, ye heavens! grief seemed unfeigned!  
Thus lying low, with face most pale,  
Impassive, wan—all mourned to see. . . .  
But lo! he lived. With strength shattered  
Battled the world, for living strove;  
And him, who had at Death's door lain,  
All fought, e'en those who grief had shown.

It seemed as if Heaven conspired  
Through this being to prove men base;  
Dying he struggled—all were foes.  
Anon he died. . . . The heavens grew black—  
Infernal storms ravaged the land.



In the shadowy presence of death  
How fade worldly desires!  
Yea, when gazing on the dead,  
How quenched are passion's fires!  
Then with grief weighed down the soul  
In agony doth roll.

As impassive and still is the face,  
Thou thinkest so sadly,  
Whereon then thine eyes do gaze,  
So thine anon shall be;  
And with grief weighed down the soul  
In agony doth roll.



If in strife thou hast lived and hated  
The dead and been unkind:  
Oh, ye might have lived peaceful  
Hadst thou not been so blind!  
And with grief weighed down the soul  
In agony doth roll.



Lower the dead into the grave,  
To his eternal resting-place—  
Yea, cover the dead with earth and sing  
The songs of loving-grace.  
And weep ye no more, O ye mourners,  
When ye come to the grave and strew thereo'er  
Your tokens of sadness, sweet flowers of spring,  
For him that is no more.

Dark be the days of bereavement sad,  
When lonely and sorrowful here ye dwell,  
Rememb'ring the days with the dear Beloved,  
Whose death too soon befell.  
Yet weep ye no more, O ye mourners,  
When ye come to the grave and strew thereo'er  
Your tokens of sadness, sweet flowers of spring,  
For him that is no more.



So sorrowful I rise up in the night  
And struggle with despair;  
My soul takes wing, to lone grave takes its flight,  
For thou art there!

Tempestuous winds roar loud and fearfully;  
By them and rain is made  
Infernal din, which to perceive e'en I . . .  
I grow afraid.

Upon the floor I lie prostrate, shaken  
By terror's mighty fears;  
I lift once more my face ghastly, and then . . .  
The dawn appears!

A light most bright, surpassing beautiful,  
In the far gloom I see:  
Thy face it is, that on me bends joyful, . . .  
Tranquillity!



Oh say, what desirest thou? Not happiness  
Nor pleasure, for thou dost see  
Through all things finite and infinite; . . .  
What is that unutterable longing in thee?  
For thou art divine if nought else on earth is,  
Thy soul is a fount of sorrows and tears,  
That o'erflows with thine anguish as thou contemplatest  
This sad sighing world of fears.

An outcast from all, thou desirest nothing  
From life and the world—thou laborest  
Through thy sorrows and misfortune for all living,  
And for thy labors thou art opprest.  
Only through evils averted from the downtrodden  
Canst thou find joy;—a deity  
Art thou, O sovereign spirit, that for ever pinest  
For death—for death's sweet tranquillity.



Desirest thou divine poet to be,  
First shalt thou pass through sorrow's bitter trial  
And drain the cup of human misery  
Unto the dregs, but steadfastly withal.  
The citadel thou sought thou shalt have won,  
Yet yawns an abyss dark not far away,  
And there waiting lurks grim oblivion—  
Death is its name, and thou its willing prey.

A dread curse over thee shall have been thrown,  
And passionless thou wilt not care to live,  
For life itself thy soul shall have outgrown;  
Bowed down and crushed by thought infinitive,  
In vain through many trials thou'lt have gone.



So weariedly and sad through life we go,  
Each year more sorrowful than the last,  
Still clinging to life, and vain dreams pursue  
Though heart-broken o'er the past.

The last dream when shattered, "Come, let us go.  
Receive us, O Death, into thy domain!"  
We sigh, thankful for this blissful boon  
That relieves us from all pain.



Days of the Past! and the remembrance of painful sorrows  
Rises up in the soul, casting over life a pall,  
And then I do weep, and in vain sophistries of ages  
With broken heart recall.

Thy voice, O Heart, rises up in justification  
As the oceans of grief swell yet mightier each day;  
Thou askest too if for nought were thy struggles and tears—  
Thy ruin nought can stay.

Who here shall say, viewing the infinite source of sorrow,  
That it is as it should be, part of a plan,  
And not the vain workings of a Nature blind and cruel,  
Bewildering to man?

None here shall say! In life's ocean tempestuous we founder,  
And, far from all land, struggling vainly, we sink:  
The waves rolling on nor pause nor hear our moan—  
Carry us o'er death's brink.



Loud roars the blast from the north, and cold,  
Cold is the wind that blows from the north;  
Melancholy doth the world infold,  
Heaven and earth bitter groans send forth.

Dark and cheerless is my life and sad—  
Deliver me, Heaven, from this woe!  
'Neath life-long misery I grow mad—  
Ah, Heaven, some boon on me bestow!



There by the shore lonely the Poet see.  
His cherished son beside him stands list'ning;  
Him he counsels most wisely and gently  
On life and world himself must leave. Sighing,  
"O boy," he says, "thou wonderest why today  
I am so sad—soon thou shalt understand;

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Behold o'er us the heavens, sombre and gray—  
Life's secret there lies hidden from our command.

" 'Tis there, my son, 'tis there!  
Behold the stars that shine on high  
In cold, in dread serenity,  
Indifferent to thee.  
So beings on yon far planets,  
Viewing, like thee, the lights in space,  
Wonder and mourn  
That all is wrapt in mystery,  
The deep, the blue immensity,  
Unending space. . . .

"And if , O boy, thou learn'st to know how drear  
Existence in the fair, green world can be,  
Think on the counsels of thy father dear,  
Who weeps and sighs, dreading to leave thee here  
Alone in misery."



Poet, thy friends and servants fain would know  
Whom thou endeavorest to delude—  
Thyself or the incredulous world?  
No more than others, gentle sophist, knowest thou.  
Poet, tonight should end thy servitude:  
If thou the voice of wisdom clear wouldst heed,  
Go to the desert, bury thyself there—  
Shorn of all beauty now art thou and old.

Poet, foolish wert thou to succumb  
In this night's hour of weakness and phantoms;  
Thy foes would fall upon thee—so beware!  
Unto the end steadfast remain and true,  
A glorious retreat in thy wisdom thou'lt find.



This phantasy, Poet, the living world,  
To contemplation thereof thy mind now turn;  
The eons on eons it has endured,  
The manifold races swept away;  
The grandeurs, the miseries of mankind,  
The turmoils, strifes that have taken place,  
The achievements, deeds of the whole race  
From ages olden to this time.

Thou dreamest 'tis but a setting for thee,  
Yet 'twas ere thou cam'st, will be at thy death;  
This riddle—the world, the living, and dead—  
It waits but a mind of masterful turn  
To make all clear—art thou that one?



Another day one came to him and said:  
"Lo, formerly, when I found thee downcast,  
Thou wouldst complain o'er thy sad state and mourn;  
Now I find thee tranquil, cold, and resigned."  
The Poet said: "My friend, there comes a time  
When any man, howsoe'er cheerful his heart,  
Will suddenly feel desolate of soul,  
Unwilled, unmanned, and care not what befall.

"Such crisis comes to him in great distress,  
When wounded sore in body, or in mind  
By sudden loss of home or one beloved;  
So I, who have suffered, having survived  
Great grief, live on unmoved by good or ill."



"Wise men early begin to understand  
And comprehend that strange creature the soul,  
And govern it with firm, unbending will,  
Allowing nought to trouble their repose.  
Life's mutability they ever see;  
Wherefore, then, should what others think of them  
Disturb the thought and calmness of their minds?  
Men are but passing reeds intelligent.

"And the most wise become indifferent to  
Good or ill fortune, sufferings or none;  
Whether emotions and sensations be  
Pleasant or unpleasant, to them they be  
But wind on a fine instrument—the soul."



Have I not taken misery from the world  
In teaching that but one being doth suffer,  
Although beings innumerable exist—  
Have I not taken misery from the world?  
Have I not taught besides this truth that men  
Unto each other more than brothers are?  
Have I not taught that each living creature,  
Whosoe'er thou be, thou art thyself, O man?



Ponder, my friends, these truths I have revealed,  
Whoso shall understand them shall attain  
Unto wisdom, a spirit brave and calm;  
And many things that are yet hidden he,  
If zealously for truth he seek, shall find.



Not o'er my own wretched fate here have I mourned,  
And cursed the world—nay, friends, it is not so—  
Not o'er my own wretched fate here have I mourned;  
I may not speak of that which troubled me . . . .  
Not o'er my own wretched fate here have I mourned.—  
Doleful, my countenance in former days  
Sorrow did show; but now with face serene,  
Impassively I bear all that befalls.

Not o'er my own wretched fate here have I mourned . . .  
To me, in misery learned, more sorrows bring!  
The sorrows of the world—I can bear all  
And hate no one, for, like myself struggling,  
Each one, a creature frail, sorrow has borne.



Mourned have I long and borne through great travail,  
Yet will I not my misery proclaim;  
For death waiting, unmoved by what befalls,  
My soul from life itself I have withdrawn . . . .  
Crushed with life's woe, weeping into death go  
All my beloved—because of their sad fate  
Hatred of life, the world, in me has grown;  
No longer now songs bright, hopeful, I sing.

And ye whose creed bright is with hope shall turn,  
Like me, therefrom when old, in sorrow learned—  
Let but understanding enter your souls;  
A sublime peace, when ye at last have learned  
Renunciation, shall your beings fill.



The Poet is dead, my friends—forget the Poet!  
His body lies on the floor of the deep sea,  
Fastened there by weight of a ponderous stone;  
Life wearied him, and so he drowned himself.  
The Poet is dead, my friends—forget the Poet!  
Remember the truths that he revealed to you;  
The Poet is dead, my friends—forget the Poet!  
Remember the truths that he revealed to you.

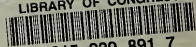
The Poet is dead, my friends—forget the Poet!  
A greater than he will come many years hence,  
And this in my dreams has been vouchsafed to me:  
The riddle of life he will rede unto all men;  
Let them heed him, protect him from all harm.







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